

Iowa Outdoors

Iowa Department of Natural Resources
www.iowadnr.com

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LABOR DAY MARKS END OF PEAK RECREATION SEASON AT IOWA STATE PARKS

DES MOINES – With schools back in session, Labor Day weekend is the last “hoorah” of the summer recreation season in Iowa.

“Many families take advantage of the holiday to get one last camping adventure in before putting away the camping gear for another year,” said Sherry Arntzen with the Iowa Department of Natural Resources state parks bureau. Iowa state parks, recreation areas and forests offer outdoor enthusiasts 62 campgrounds with more than 5,100 campsites to choose from. “Many of those campgrounds will fill over the holiday weekend,” Arntzen said..

Certain parks, such as Gull Point, Brushy Creek, George Wyth and Pine Lake, are very popular and will fill up quickly. Because all camping in Iowa state parks and recreation areas is on a first-come, first-serve basis only, people should call ahead to make sure sites are available before heading out.

“Campers may want to keep a couple of alternate parks in mind in case their favorite park is full,” said Greg Van Fosson, north central state parks supervisor for the DNR.

Campers choosing to explore new parks are reminded that the third year of the Explore Iowa Parks camping promotion is still underway and has two months remaining before the entries are due.

Campers must keep their camping registration originals and mail them to DNR by Nov. 1. Campers who mail in registrations from five different parks will receive a free postcard collection of Iowa state parks and preserves as photographed by various Iowa artists. Those who camp at seven parks get the postcard collection and a free one-year subscription to the Iowa Conservationist, the colorful magazine published bi-monthly by the DNR. Those who camp in ten different parks gets those two prizes plus a chance in a drawing for one year of free camping in Iowa State Parks, Recreation Areas and Forests, a \$250 camping gear package donated by Sportsman's Warehouse in Ankeny, Iowa or a camping coupon book good for seven nights of camping.

The Explore Iowa Parks program is open to residents and nonresidents. For more information contact the DNR at 515/242-6233 or go to www.exploreiowaparks.com

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LAKE AHQUABI CAMPGROUND CLOSED FOR LABOR DAY WEEKEND

INDIANOLA – Unseasonably wet weather this summer has caused a delay in the completion of the campground upgrade at Lake Ahquabi State Park. The campground was scheduled to re-open for the Labor Day holiday, but instead will remain closed until the \$160,000 project is completed.

“We were really hopeful that the work would be completed for the holiday, but unfortunately we had an unusually wet July and August,” said Angela Corio, landscape architect for the Iowa Department of Natural Resources. “But we are confident that when the campground reopens, the campers will truly appreciate the improvements.”

The improvements include upgrading the 87 electrical sites and relocating and surfacing the campsites. Campers may want to visit Green Valley, Rock Creek or Red Haw for Labor Day.

For more information, contact Jim Lawson at 515-281-5876.

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[Hold this story until Sept. 2]

WOOD DUCKS IN IOWA

By Joe Wilkinson

Iowa Department of Natural Resources

In the dim just-before-dawn light, four wood ducks splashed into the water. Within seconds, a couple more set down next to them. From our blind, about 25 yards up

the slope, Greg Schmitt and I watched and listened as more woodies glided, plopped and skidded onto this backwater of the Toolesboro Bottoms, near Wapello. They were hungry. And they were headed for us.

To our side, a bushel or two of shelled corn was spread, the only color in this dark, drizzly morning. Behind the bait was a wide net, folded on itself and attached to four rockets on poles a foot and a half above the ground. The trap was set. Now, it would just take patience. From my vantage point, I could see heads bobbing at the water's edge. Dozens of them. Hard to believe that these reclusive woodland waterfowl were nearly extirpated from Iowa a few decades ago.

As if on cue, the flock shuffled toward the corn. It was just minutes after sunrise, now. More wood ducks were still touching down on the water and would join them. As the first few ventured into the corn, they began scooping up the kernels. With no warning, though, the flock exploded into flight. Perhaps the squawking bluejays frightened them? Maybe the meal seemed too easy to come by?

They were back within minutes, only to flush off the site again. "I'm going to take them as soon as they settle in again," whispered Schmitt. "The more times they flush, the less likely they are to return." He held the detonator for the rocket. We were here to trap wood ducks, not to hand out breakfast. One more time, the feathered fearless leaders brought the duck parade closer. Well over 100 were within the net's reach. Schmitt touched the wire to the battery post.

Four flashes of light preceded the blast by an instant. When the smoke cleared, we had all but a handful that had been on the fringe. Time to untangle them and box them up. The blast was also the signal for help. Within a minute, five workers arrived. They had held back a couple hundred yards, until they knew Schmitt had some under wraps.

"We don't want to scare more birds than we catch," explained Schmitt. "We want to take at least 50 in a shot, to make it worthwhile. There were more than 100 grouped up on the water. As they came up to the bait, we had the biggest bunch close to the net. We got the majority of them."

Once the birds untangled, they came back out of the boxes, one at a time. As a numbered aluminum band went on a leg, it was called out and entered in a log sheet. Each bird was aged and sexed, too; all critical data someday down the road. "You can see this one has the tear-drop pattern on the end of its wing feathers," pointed out Department of Natural Resources wildlife biologist Bill Ohde. "That means it's a female. Notched tail feathers indicate a young of the year duck." Various color patterns around the eyes and head also help identify each bird. On a few question marks, the wildlife workers turned the birds over and inspected the reproductive organs for confirmation.

Once recorded, each bird was given a soft toss. With air under their wings, they didn't stick around, many emitting their soft whistle as they flapped out of sight. Should one ever be recaptured, or taken by a hunter, its aluminum bands would help fill in a

story that's been years in the making. "It gives us information on their survival; where wood ducks migrate to, where their sources of mortality are," explains Ohde. "If there is ever a problem with population, it might not do any good to cut back on hunting seasons here, if band data shows that they are taken in Louisiana or Arkansas. It gives us valuable information for setting hunting seasons."

Schmitt's shot netted 99 new birds and six recaptures, pushing the Odessa crew over its 350 bird target. With good bird numbers and the efficiency of rocket netting, Odessa beats its total each year. By this week, they were pushing 700. Iowa's quota is about 3,000 this year. DNR wildlife workers, using rocket nets or wire 'Y traps' over bait are on track to meet the goal. Iowa usually leads the country in banding wood ducks; something that pays off, as federal wildlife regulators determine hunting days and parameters within which states work to set their seasons.

Not bad for a bird that virtually disappeared from Iowa. "Wood ducks have made an amazing comeback," agrees Ohde. "It has been a combination of protecting them and restoring habitat; lowland timber and lots of artificial nest boxes." Those nest box programs are supported by countless hours from conservation groups; hunters and others who put in the hours placing nest boxes or by financially supporting habitat programs.

Those bobbing heads and low whistles are here to stay because of all the help.

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IOWA FISHING REPORT

For the week of August 31, 2004

www.iowadnr.com

The Iowa Fishing Report is issued every other week into the fall. For current information on fishing conditions for your lake or area, contact the office in that district. Phone numbers are listed with each district report.

Southeast

Mississippi River Pools 16 to 19: Fishing on Pools 16 to 19 has been good. The water temperature at Lock and Dam 16 (Muscatine) is 74 degrees and the river pool stage is 11.37 and is expected to remain stable over the next several days. Fishing for channel catfish has been fair. Bluegill and crappie fishing has been good around the wing dams and in deeper backwater areas such as **Big Timber** and **Odessa** on jigs tipped with minnows and worms or bobber rigs (some sorting required for sizeable fish). Walleye and sauger fishing has been slow. White bass fishing has been fair in the tailwater areas.

Lake Odessa (Louisa): The water level is down for the rest of the summer. Access to some of the remote ponds is now very limited. Fishing has been hit or miss but anglers are still catching some nice bluegills and crappies in the upper end of Sand Run.

Lake Darling (Washington): Anglers are catching small crappies along the shoreline. Look for the bigger crappies among the cedar tree piles in the middle of the lake. It is a little early for the crappies to head shallow for the fall feeding frenzy.

Lake Belva Deer (Keokuk): Fishing pressure has dropped off quite a bit due to the weather. Anglers are still catching bluegills and a few crappies fishing around the trees in deeper water. Look for the bass to move shallow to feed on the young of the year bass and bluegills.

Lake Rathbun (Appanoose): Crappies have been hitting on small crankbaits trolled over rock reefs and other underwater structure. Channel catfish have been hitting on liver and stink bait.

Lake Sugema (Van Buren): Largemouth bass have been hitting on artificial lures. Bluegills have been hitting on small jigs.

Lake Miami (Monroe): Channel catfish have been biting on liver. Largemouth bass have been hitting on artificial lures fished around the standing timber.

Lake Wapello (Davis): Bluegills and crappies have been hitting on small jigs drifted in the main lake area. Channel catfish have been hitting on stink bait and chicken liver.

Diamond Lake (Poweshiek): Crappie fishing is starting to pick up. Fish small jigs around the brush piles and trees.

Lake Macbride (Johnson): Crappie fishing has been spotty, but is beginning to pick up. Fish a jig and minnow combination around the brush.

Pleasant Creek (Linn): Channel catfish are biting on stink bait, chicken liver and night crawlers on the bottom. Fish up to 18 pounds have been reported.

Iowa River (Washington and Louisa): Last week's rain has made the river level jump up by about four feet. Look for it to drop just as fast. The recent cool weather has slowed fishing. Anglers should try night crawlers and minnows to get at those fish working the worms and minnows that were washed into the river from the rains.

For more information on fishing in southeast Iowa, call the regional office in Brighton at 319-694-2430.

Northeast

Mississippi River Pools 9 to 15: The Mississippi River at Guttenberg is 73 degrees and water clarity is good. Water levels are low and dropping slowly. Good fishing continues on **Pools 9 to 11** with white bass, bluegill, largemouth bass, smallmouth bass, walleye, and sauger all being caught in good numbers. White bass are starting to school up right now and action can be very fast. White bass up to 15 inches are being reported in **Pools 9 to 11**. Watch for schools feeding on minnows. If you see areas where minnows are continuously being chased, try to maintain some distance away from the melee to avoid spooking the white bass. Any lure that will flash, such as a spoon or a spinner, will work. Make long casts into the areas where the minnows have been breaking the water. Bluegill fishing continues to be quite good in **Pools 9 to 11** with many fish being taken out of brush piles in moderate flowing sloughs. Areas such as Minnesota Slough, near New Albin, Harpers Slough, near Harpers Ferry, Johnson and Wyalusing Slough, near McGregor and Cassville Slough near Guttenberg have produced good fishing. Tailwater areas near rock riprap have also been good for bluegill fishing. A simple rig with a night crawler and a small split shot works best. Walleye and sauger

action is also quite good at times on the Mississippi River. Some fish are being taken in the tailwaters of **Locks and Dams 9 and 10**. Most tailwater anglers are using a jig tipped with a minnow. Other places to try for walleye and sauger are large flowing sloughs such as Minnesota Slough, near New Albin or Harpers Slough, near Harpers Ferry. Anglers fishing these areas are using a ‘lindy’ type rig with a night crawler. Largemouth bass fishing has been excellent in **Pools 9 to 11**. These fish are being caught on a variety of lures, but the traditional tube jig and spinner baits are working best. Largemouth are generally found in backwater lakes on the Mississippi, however, with the low water levels, these fish are moving out into current areas. Look for largemouth near the openings of large backwater complexes or in adjacent flowing sloughs. Some are even being caught on rock wing dams. Big Slough and DeSoto Bay near Lansing have been hot in **Pool 9**. In **Pool 10**, McGregor Lake and the lakes near Wylusing Slough have been excellent and Cassville Slough has produced well in recent weeks. Smallmouth bass fishing is also excellent in **Pools 9 to 11**. Smallmouth bass are found in swift current areas with rock. These areas are generally associated with main channel rocky habitats, including bank stabilization rock, day markers or wing dams. Spinners and crankbaits are the lures of choice for this feisty fish. Using top-water lures, such as floating crankbaits or even bug imitation lures can also be effective for smallies. Many fish are in the sub-legal 10 to 13-inch range, but they still are fun to catch. The size limit on both large and smallmouth bass in the Mississippi River is 14 inches.

Water level on the **Mississippi River** at Bellevue is 4.51 feet and the temperature is 72 degrees. Channel catfish are fair to good in **Pools 12 to 15**. Fishing for catfish has slowed with the cooler water temperatures; however, anglers are still catching catfish on dip baits, cut baits and night crawlers. Fish for channel cats in the main channel near the ends of wing dams in the faster currents—move to find fish. Freshwater drum fishing is excellent on night crawlers. Drum are being caught in a variety of places including side sloughs and the main channel border around the wing dams in **Pools 12 to 15**. When fishing for channel catfish or freshwater drum, if you don’t get a bite in 10 to 15 minutes or when the action slows, move to a new location. Bluegills are also hitting everywhere in **Pools 12 to 15**. Bluegills are being caught on the main channel border and in the backwater sloughs with no current. Night crawlers fished either under bobbers or along the bottom are producing nice catches of this panfish. Walleye fishing is fair to good with some anglers being very successful dragging crankbaits, stick baits or night crawlers along the face of the wing dams in **Pools 12 to 15**. Largemouth bass are hitting top-water lures, spinner baits, tubes, and jigs tipped with a worm fished in the backwater sloughs and main channel borders around woody structure, vegetation and off rocks in **Pools 12 to 15**. Crappie fishing is fair in **Pools 12 to 15**.

Cedar River (Floyd and Mitchell): Walleye, northern pike and smallmouth bass are all being caught on night crawlers.

Cedar (Bremer and Black Hawk), **West Fork Cedar** (Black Hawk), **Shell Rock** (Butler, Bremer and Black Hawk), and **Wapsipinicon rivers** (Buchanan): Walleye fishing is fair to good on jigs tipped with a night crawler or leech. Some anglers are having success using crankbaits for walleye. Channel catfish are fair on the Cedar River.

Maquoketa River (Delaware): Walleye fishing is fair to good on jigs tipped with a night crawler.

Lake Hendricks (Howard): Bluegill fishing is good using worms or night crawlers in 10 to 12 feet of water next to structure. Channel catfish are hitting chicken liver and night crawlers fished along the bottom.

Trout fishing is excellent and streams are clear and fishable. September means that the three northeast Iowa trout hatcheries are using the expanded stream stocking schedule. Streams such as Dalton Lake, Otter, Patterson, Silver, Swiss Valley and many more are being stocked weekly with catchable-size trout. September is a beautiful time of the year on Iowa's trout streams. The weather is perfect and you'll find less competition for your favorite fishing holes. For current trout stocking information on northeast Iowa trout streams, call the trout stocking hotline at 563-927-5736. You can also access the proposed trout stocking calendar through the internet at

www.iowadnr.com and go to the fish and fishing web pages.

For information on fishing in northeast Iowa, call the regional office in Manchester at 563-927-3276.

Northwest

Spirit Lake (Dickinson): Walleye fishing has improved. Anglers are catching legal size fish trolling crankbaits in 15 to 18 feet of water. Many sublegal fish are being caught using live bait and crankbaits. Smallmouth and largemouth bass are biting at Big Stoney, the footbridge and in Angler's Bay. Yellow perch fishing has been sporadic. Stay on the move for the best results. Buffalo Run and Angler's Bay are producing the best catches. Anglers are catching a few muskies while fishing for bass and walleyes.

West Okoboji (Dickinson): Yellow perch can be caught along the weed lines. Largemouth bass fishing is good around wooden docks and weed edges. Smallmouth bass are hitting small crayfish fished over the rock piles. Anglers are catching crappies around wooden docks associated with deep water.

Lost Island (Palo Alto): Anglers are catching walleyes trolling crankbaits in 10 to 12 feet of water.

Silver Lake (Dickinson): Anglers are catching walleyes trolling crankbaits in the main lake basin.

Little Sioux River (Clay and Cherokee): Channel catfish fishing is good in the deep holes and around snags.

Black Hawk Lake (Sac): Channel catfish fishing is good using stink bait or liver, or drifting dead chubs.

Storm Lake (Buena Vista): Channel catfish fishing is good using stink bait or liver. Walleye fishing is fair to good using slip bobbers and night crawlers over the rock piles.

Yellow Smoke (Crawford): Fishing is good for big bluegills using small jigs tipped with wax worms or pieces of crayfish tails. Drift or cast this presentation into 8 to 11 feet of water. Anglers are catching some nice white bass while fishing for bluegills.

Arrowhead Lake (Sac): Channel catfish fishing is good using dead chubs on the bottom in 5 to 10 feet of water.

Brushy Creek (Webster): The bridge on P-73 should open for vehicle traffic by Aug. 31. This is the bridge just south of I-520. Bass fishing has slowed. The morning and evening hours are best. Channel catfish have been caught in 5 to 10 feet of water using night crawlers. Bluegills continue to bite throughout the lake.

Clear Lake (Cerro Gordo): Walleye fishing is fair. Trolling crankbaits and live bait in 8 to 12 feet of water is working best. Remember the 14-inch minimum length limit. Yellow bass fishing has been spotty, with some reports of 10 to 20 fish being caught. Channel catfish are biting on chicken liver and dead chubs. Bullheads are hitting on night crawlers fished near the bottom.

Beeds Lake (Franklin): Fishing is good for 7 to 9-inch crappies. The fish are suspended in the main basin. Drift or troll small jigs to locate fish. The best place to for crappies from shore is at the end of the jetties.

Lake Cornelia (Wright): Channel catfish are hitting night crawlers, chicken liver and stink bait. Fishing is good for 7 to 10-inch bullheads using night crawlers

For more information on fishing in northwest Iowa, call the regional office in Spirit Lake at 712-336-1840.

Southwest

Viking (Montgomery): Crappie and bluegill fishing is fair using jigs tipped with night crawler or minnow in 6 to 8 feet of water. Channel catfish fishing is good using liver. Largemouth bass fishing has picked up in the evening around structure.

Cold Springs (Cass): Fishing is fair for crappies around the brush piles. Channel catfish fishing is good.

Manawa (Pottawattamie): Fishing is excellent for channel catfish around Boy Scout Island. Walleyes are being caught on the west shore along the rocks.

Orient (Adair): Channel catfish are fair using liver in the evening.

Greenfield (Adair): Channel catfish are good toward evening.

Mormon Trail (Adair): Walleye fishing is good using crankbaits or jigs. The 7 to 9-inch crappies can be caught using minnows in 6 to 8 feet of water. Bluegills are being caught drifting a piece of night crawler 5 to 7 feet deep in front of the dam. Fishing is good for largemouth bass. Channel catfish are good using night crawlers or liver.

Meadow (Adair): Bluegill fishing is fair on jigs and night crawlers. Largemouth bass fishing is good.

Prairie Rose (Shelby): Fishing is fair for 7-inch crappies in 6 to 8 feet of water using jigs and minnows around rocks and woody structure. Bass fishing is good. Anglers are catching channel catfish on liver.

Littlefield Lake (Audubon): Fishing is fair for large bluegills drifting with night crawlers. Channel catfish fishing is good.

Willow (Harrison): Largemouth bass fishing is fair in the evenings around structure. Bluegills are good along weed edges. Channel catfish are being caught in the evenings using chicken liver.

Southwest Iowa Farm Ponds: Channel catfish, bluegill and largemouth bass fishing is fair. Remember to ask permission and clean up after yourself.

Big Creek (Polk): Channel catfish fishing has been good using night crawlers and cut and stink baits. Bluegill fishing has slowed, but fish that are being caught are often 8 inches or larger. A few crappies are being caught in deeper water and an occasional nice walleye has been caught on trolling crankbaits.

Lake Ahquabi (Warren): Channel catfish fishing is good with cut and stink baits. Bluegill and redear sunfish fishing has been slow using jigs or hook/bobber combination with worms and wax worms.

Hooper Lake (Warren): Bluegill fishing has been fair using worms and jigs. Largemouth bass fishing has been slow using buzzbaits and surface lures.

Hickory Grove (Story): Channel catfish fishing has been fair on night crawlers. Crappie fishing has been fair in deeper water, although fishing is spotty. Largemouth bass fishing has been slow. Top-water and buzzbaits are the best lures.

Don Williams (Boone): Channel catfish fishing has been good to excellent using night crawlers and chicken liver. Crappie and bluegill fishing has been slow. Use minnows and jigs for crappies and small jigs with worms for bluegills. Largemouth bass fishing has slowed. Some fish are hitting surface plugs and crankbaits.

Rock Creek Lake (Jasper): Channel catfish fishing has been good along the shorelines and shallow water. Crappie fishing is slow with the best fishing in deeper water. Largemouth bass fishing is also slow, although a few nice fish have been reported.

Easter Lake (Polk): Channel catfish fishing has been good using night crawlers and stink baits. Bluegill and crappie fishing has slowed, although some anglers have been doing well. An occasional walleye is being caught.

Red Rock (Marion): White bass fishing has been excellent using crankbaits, sonars and a variety of casting lures. Channel catfish fishing has been fair in the bays and coves.

Red Rock tailwater (Marion): Channel catfish fishing has been good using traditional baits. A few nice walleye have been caught. White bass fishing has been good in the tailwater using jigs and minnows. Crappies in the 10 to 14-inch range are starting to show up in good numbers.

Roberts Creek (Marion): Crappie fishing has been fair to good using jigs and minnows or night crawlers. Channel catfish have been hitting on night crawlers.

Saylorville Lake (Polk): White bass fishing has been good to excellent trolling crankbaits or casting small spoons from shore with fish from 3 to 4 pounds reported. A few wipers were mixed in with the white bass. Channel catfish fishing has been good on traditional baits. The spillway outlet at Big Creek Lake is one of the better areas.

Saylorville Lake tailwater/river (Polk): White bass and channel catfish fishing has been good below Saylorville Reservoir. Flathead catfish fishing is fair with some nice fish reported.

Three Mile (Union): Channel catfish are being caught using blood baits and liver. Bluegills are being caught on wax worms in 8 to 14 feet of water. Largemouth bass and walleye can be caught on crankbaits and jigs in deeper water. Anglers are starting to catch muskies. Smallmouth bass are being caught using jigs that look like crayfish along the dam.

Twelve Mile (Union): Fishing for channel catfish is good using night crawlers or liver.

Icaria (Adams): Fishing is good for catfish using liver.

Green Valley (Union): Channel catfish can be caught in the bays using liver and night crawlers. Some bluegill can be caught on wax worms and night crawlers around the deeper structure.

Little River (Decatur): Catfish can be caught in the open bays using liver or night crawlers.

Slip Bluff (Decatur): Some crappies are being caught off the deeper trees piles and flooded timber.

West Lake Osceola (Clarke): Channel catfish fishing is good using liver.

Fogle Lake (Ringgold): Channel catfish can be caught in the rocks or shallow bays. The lake is currently being lowered to improve fish growth but is still accessible for fishing.

For more information on fishing in southwest Iowa, call the regional office in Lewis at 712-769-2587.

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